



**From: Councilmember Mike O'Brien**

**To: Interested parties**

**Date: April 8, 2013**

**Re: Draft proposal for expanding Safe Parking Program**

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Councilmember O'Brien is interested in developing proposals to expand current City efforts to deal with two specific policy objectives (1) assist homeless vehicle campers to move off of the streets and into housing, and (2) reduce the burden on communities who have been hosting vehicle campers for years. This memo provides an update on the City's current program, and suggested next steps for such an effort.

**Background:** According to the 2013 One Night Count, of the 1,989 unsheltered people counted in Seattle, a plurality were found sleeping in a car or truck (631 people; for comparison of the next two largest shares of unsheltered people, 292 people were counted in "structures," 257 were counted "walking around").<sup>1</sup>

The City implemented the Pilot Safe Parking Program in 2012. Three churches provide ten parking spots with access to bathrooms. All of these churches are located in the Ballard area. The process of obtaining host participation among the faith-based community in this program has happened slowly, and, therefore, expansion of the program has been slow.

In 2012, City funds supported a part-time case manager who worked with program participants to help move these individuals into stable housing. Neighborhood Matching Funds from the Department of Neighborhoods were also provided to support an outreach worker who worked with vehicle campers to move them into the Safe Parking Program, and to secure participation by churches in the Safe Parking Program. In 2012, 31 participants (included individuals and families) were served by the program. Of the 31 participants:

- 20 entered more stable housing (transitional housing, permanent housing, moving in with friends or family). Eight of these were still housed after six months. 12 may still be housed but have not reached six month check in point. Human Services Department (HSD) staff will check on status of these participants.
- Seven participants were still in the program at the end of 2102. HSD staff also checking on status of these participants.
- Four participants left or were asked to leave the program.

Of the 31 served in 2012, 35% gave a last permanent address in Seattle, 23% gave an address in King County, outside of Seattle, 10% gave an address in Washington State outside of King County, 19% gave an address outside Washington State. 13% did not provide information on last permanent address.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Seattle/King County Committee to End Homelessness, 2013 Street Count results, [http://www.homelessinfo.org/what\\_we\\_do/one\\_night\\_count/2013\\_results.php](http://www.homelessinfo.org/what_we_do/one_night_count/2013_results.php).

The 2013-2014 budget provides increased funding for the Safe Parking Program to support a full-time case manager and part time outreach worker for the program. It is anticipated that 40 participants will be served by the program in 2013 and 60 participants will be served in 2014.

**Current Situation:** Despite the relative early success of the program in getting a large share of program participants into housing, Seattle Police Department and Seattle Parking Enforcement continue to field numerous complaints from neighbors and businesses about ongoing car camping concerns. The complaints range in nature, but most often take the form of 72 hour parking enforcement, public nuisance (e.g., littering, human waste, generators running in the planting strip, etc.) or potential criminal activity (e.g., drug dealing, prostitution, fencing goods).

A key component of the enforcement response is to request outreach to vehicular residents by engaging them directly or requesting the Human Services Department or the outreach contract holder to engage them. Council and the Executive have also encouraged discretion in the enforcement responses so to not further push vehicle residents deeper into homelessness or poverty.

The current situation is a drain on Police and Parking Enforcement resources and puts these departments in a difficult situation at odds with the response the complainants expect and the direction they have received from the Council and Executive. The scale of the pilot is too small to effectively deal with the scope of the problem citywide.

**Proposal outline:** Councilmember O'Brien proposes expanding the Safe Parking Program over the next two years, with the following goals.

- Expand Safe Parking spaces across Seattle and with regional partners by December 31, 2014.
  - Lots would host two-to-five cars per lot and be geographically dispersed throughout Seattle and could potentially include:
    - Faith-based organizations
    - Private property
    - City-owned property
  - To participate in the program, lots should include:
    - Access to a bathroom and electrical outlet
    - Housing case management and referrals to other needed services
  - The City may also consider making a small grant available to participating organizations to help fund capital improvements needed to become a host (e.g., new locks on interior doors to allow access to a restroom but not other spaces in the building).
  - The City should continue the current practice of moving families with children who apply for the Safe Parking Program directly into housing via motel vouchers or otherwise.
- Increase the contract for housing casework services and outreach to vehicular residents and participating organizations sufficient to meet growth in program.
- Review the housing options available for placement out of the program and expand those that can efficiently and effectively get people out of their vehicles—including options to

expand existing programs (e.g., landlord liaison) or to create new ones that we have seen work in other cities around the country.

- Design an evaluation mechanism to track the program's expansion and progress towards re-housing the program participants. Metrics should include: demographics of the population served; number of applicants, number of denials, and size of waiting list; amount of time program participants stay in the lot before placed in housing; number and type of other support services needed and utilized by program participants.
- Engage King County, neighboring cities and the Committee to End Homelessness and other housing and homeless advocates to build support for a region-wide solution to the issue.